Confidential

Refugees: Overpopulation

39/1954

Vol II

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39/82/54

, 1 December 1954

The Right Honourable
R. A. Butler, P.C., M.P.,
Chancellor of the Exchequer
11 Downing Street,
LONDON S. W. 1.

My dear Chancellor,

During my recent visit to London in my capacity of Special Representative of the Council of Europe for National Refugees and Over-Population, I had the advantage of discussing with the Foreign Office, the Treasury and the Ministry of Labour and National Service, the details of my plan for solving the problem presented by the existence in Europe of national refugees and over-population.

These talks left me with the impression that the objections of Her Majestys Government to my proposals are mainly financial.

I have ventured to write to you personally in this matter because the problem seems to me to be one of great gravity and because I would find invaluable any support which you might feel able to give me when I present my report to the Ministers of the Council of Europe at the forthcoming meeting in Paris.

The main subject of my talks was the establishment of the European Fund proposed in my Report. I was able, I think, to make it clear that there had never been in my mind, any question of financing this European Fund by outright grants by Governments, but rather by means of loans redeemable within a period to be laid down beforehand. To this it was objected that international loans granted to Governments in the past have seldom been fully repaid.

What I have in mind, however, is that Governments' subscriptions should be paid over to and administered by an autonomous institution which would, in turn, be responsible for

making loans to individuals. Individuals seem more scrupulous over paying their debts than collectivities. Recent experience has shown that the confidence placed by financing bodies in emigrants and refugees has hardly ever been betrayed. The Bank for Expelled Persons in Germany, for instance, announced recently that only an extremely small percentage of the loans granted to refugees has failed to be refunded; and that the unrefunded percentage has not exceeded the losses normally incurred by credit institutes. The reason for this is that unemployed persons, whether refugees or surplus elements of population, are usually eager to avail themselves to the utmost of the opportunity thus afforded them of building a new life for themselves.

Governments might, however, reasonably require some more solid guarantee against the failure of individuals to repay a loan. To this end a "receiving" country might accept administrative responsibility for seeing that an immigrant repaid the money loaned to him; but, in the event of his inability to do so, the country from which he had emigrated would be responsible for reimbursing the Institution. Under my scheme the national authorities of the country from which a man wished to emigrate would in fact be required to select the beneficiaries themselves, after examining inter alia the creditworthiness of the person concerned.

This system would obviously have to be worked out in detail by financial experts; but such guarantees already appear likely to be forthcoming. I would, moreover, call your attention to the modesty of the sums which it is suggested Governments should subscribe to the Institution. It amounts to no more, in fact, than an outright subscription of capital to a small fund. From that Fund, the Institution could grant a certain number of loans to individuals, the repayment of which would enable further loans to be made. Once established, this Fund might also apply to sources outside Europe and launch public loans.

I am writing in similar terms to Mr. Eden.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

P. SCHNEITER
Special Representative of the
Council of Europe for National
Refugees and Over-Population

39/79/54

(M 581/46)

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

CONFIDENTIAL

November 15, 1954.

Stretton has passed to me your letter ALG 253/1/22 of November 3 about the mistake in the booklet "No Room for Them". It is clearly impossible for a correction to be issued to a publication of this sort, nor would we really wish to draw attention to the fact that our record is not as magnificent as it is here made out to be! But I am copying this correspondence to Audland at Strasbourg, so that he can point the mistake out to the Secretariat if he thinks this necessary.

Monsieur Schneiter is more concerned with the future than with the past, and we have left him in no doubt about our inability to cope with a further large instalment of European immigrants, so I do not think we need draw his attention to this mistake.

issue Celtic
Mr Hope-Jones

(R.C.Hope Jones)

CSPT
29/11

K.P.Witney, Esq.,
Home Office.

some further

Tel. No. : WHItehall 8100

Ext. 404

Our Ref. ALG 253/1/22

Your Ref.

HOME OFFICE,

WHITEHALL, S.W.1.

581/46

3rd November, 1954.

Dear Stretton,

The enclosed booklet prepared by M. Schneiter, the Special Representative of the Council of Europe for National Refugees and Over-Population, has just been brought to my notice by Sedgley of the Aliens Department here. He has noticed that in Appendix I a figure of 400,000 is given as the total number of refugees in the United Kingdom: in fact this is the approximate number of all registered aliens in the country and separate figures for refugees are not kept. I mention this in case you think it worth while to correct the error. It probably does not matter much so far as this booklet is concerned, but you might think it as well that M. Schneiter should be aware of the true position.

Yours sincerely,

K. P. Wiseman.

R.F. Stretton, Esq.

39/69/54

CONFIDENTIAL

(USR 1111/88)

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

September 30, 1954.

Secretary's copy 9/x

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your letter 39/60/54 of September 14 about the Netherlands proposals concerning refugees.

2. We have now seen Resolution (54)15 as given in CM(54)154 and agree that we could not possibly have accepted its terms in view of our opposition on grounds of principle and of finance to the High Commissioner's proposal for the establishment of a $ 12 million Fund for integration purposes.

3. I am rather puzzled by the reference in the final sentence of paragraph 3 of your letter "to an agreement of 1951 which brought some 216,000 refugees in Austria within his mandate". There is to our knowledge no agreement which could specifically devolve responsibility on the High Commissioner for refugees in any one country. We imagine that the High Commissioner may have been referring to the inclusion within his mandate of the Volksdeutsche in Austria. These persons of German ethnic origin were not within the mandate of the International Refugee Organisation and were specifically excluded by its Constitution (Persons not the concern of the Organisation - "Persons of German ethnic origin, whether German nationals or members of German minorities in other countries who (a) have been or may be transferred to Germany from other countries; (b) have been, during the second world war, evacuated from Germany to other countries, etc.). Although excluded from international care and assistance by I.R.O., the Volksdeutsche in Austria were included in the High Commissioner's mandate since they did not possess full rights of citizenship and were considered to require legal and political protection. It was precisely because the High Commissioner's functions are essentially those of legal and political protection that his mandate was much broader than that of I.R.O. It was certainly never the intention that the inclusion of the Volksdeutsche in Austria should be used as an excuse for the provision of international subsidies for them by the United Nations. In fact the Austrians have passed a number of laws bringing the conditions of Volksdeutsche into line with that of Austrian nationals and facilitating their naturalisation. This is, of course, a further argument against the $ 12 million Fund as it would inevitably tend to discourage naturalisation both on the part of refugees and of governments, and would encourage refugee-mindedness.

4. We had not given you specific instructions on voting, since it was difficult to see what type of resolution would finally emerge. You will remember, however that Audland spoke to Evans before the Working Group met on the evening of September 8, and that subsequently Evans rang Audland back that same evening to say that we had considered the position and decided that abstention would be the best policy. In the short interval between the two telephone calls we had learnt that the Secretary of State had approved a negative reply to a letter from M. Beyen asking for support for the Netherlands proposals (a copy of the correspondence was sent to you under our reference USR 1111/82 of September 6).

/ 5.

P.W.S. Scarlett, Esq., C.M.G.,
Permanent United Kingdom Representative
to the Council of Europe,
STRASBOURG.

5. I am copying this letter to Wardrop at Geneva.

Yours ever,

E R Warner

(E.R. Warner)

39/59/54

(M 581/25)

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

RESTRICTED

August 21, 1954.

31 AUG 1954
Ref: 43/56

Thank you for your letter of August 12 about the draft Handbook on European Statistics. I suggest that the main part of your reply to this should be on the lines of paragraphs 3 and 4 of your letter, but that you might round it off with something like this:-

"As regards the final paragraph of your letter, I have no suggestions to make about the compilation either of this or of future editions of the Handbook. In this connexion, I feel bound to point out that H.M.G. find it difficult to understand what use the Handbook will be either to governments, who are already in possession of the various publications from which the tables are extracted, or to the Consultative Assembly's Committee on Population and Refugees, to whose work 90% of the tables would appear to be almost entirely irrelevant."

I/

D.E.Locke, Esq.,
Central Statistical Office,
Cabinet Office,
Great George Street,
S.W.1.

I am sending a copy of this letter, together with a copy of yours, to Scarlett in Strasbourg.

(R.C.Hope-Jones)

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CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE
CABINET OFFICE
Great George Street, S.W.1

58/25 C

12th August, 1954

Dear Hope-Jones

I am enclosing two copies of a further letter dated 10th August we have received from the Director of Research of the Council of Europe on the subject of a Handbook of European Statistics.

You will see that the reply I made on 28th July to the original letter of 19th June after consultation with you seems to have had very little effect.

The greater part of the information in the Handbook is, as you will recall, material we have already supplied to other international organisations and provided it has been taken from up-to-date issues of the publications of those organisations and the source is quoted we can see little point in expending a great deal of time on further checking. Some of the material may represent independent estimates by other international organisations (for example, M.S.A., E.C.E., etc.) which for quite different reasons we would not wish to comment on.

With regard to the third paragraph of this latest letter a quick review of the contents of the Handbook seems to reveal only 3 tables out of 229 where the figures are stated not to relate to United Kingdom but only to parts of it. In none of these cases can I hold out much hope of providing United Kingdom figures.

R. C. Hope-Jones, Esq.,
Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

/In view of

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In view of Christofas' letter of 2nd July to Scarlett in Strasbourg you may feel that it may be desirable to raise the general question of the need for this new document. On the other hand you may prefer us to reply to the Secretariat along the lines of the third and fourth paragraphs of this letter. I should greatly appreciate your views on the sort of reply that should be made.

Yours sincerely,

(D. E. LOCKE)

COPY

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

Strasbourg

Ref. R

JD/MW

10 August 1954

Dear Sir,

In your letter of 28th July you inform us that you are unable to comply with our request for additions and corrections to our Handbook of European Statistics.

Perhaps we did not make our request sufficiently clear. I should explain that although our figures are derived from international sources we should very much like to have them confirmed by the national statistical offices. I was instructed by the relevant Committee of the Consultative Assembly to seek this confirmation.

With regard to the United Kingdom, I should be very glad whenever possible to have the figures for the entire territory rather than those for England and Wales as usually provided.

I would also be grateful for any suggestions you may care to make regarding the compilation of the handbook and any material your Office would like to see included in future editions.

Yours faithfully,

W. von SCHMIEDEN

Head of the Direction

D.E. LOCKE, Esq.,
Central Statistical Office,
Cabinet Office,
Great George Street, S.W.1.

39/56/54

Sean Lay Pass
6/9

(USR 1111/53)

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

CONFIDENTIAL

August 12, 1954.

Dear Peter,

1 SEP

Thank you for your letters 39/45/54 and 39/46/54 of July 7 about the Netherlands proposals in the Council of Europe in connexion with refugees.

2. I do not think that we can be in any way committed to the present proposals through our assent to the terms of Resolution (52) 75 adopted by the Minister's Deputies on December 22, 1952. This resolution does no more than request governments to grant priority, to any investment project likely to encourage the integration of refugees, and calls upon Governments of member States to cooperate with the Committee on Population and Refugees in preparing projects "in cooperation with the experts and international organisations concerned." It does not therefore detract from our thesis that the responsibility for the economic integration of refugees must remain with the governments of the countries of residence who might obtain funds from existing international institutions e.g. the International Bank. Moreover it bears out our view that the economic integration of refugees cannot be treated in isolation, but must be dealt with by governments in the broad framework of economic reconstruction and rehabilitation (the resolution refers to "any investment project likely to encourage the integration of refugees and surplus population). If you will refer to the brief for this item (Meeting December 18, 1952 - Item 8: Recommendation 4 - on the international financing of the rehabilitation of refugees and surplus elements of population) you will see that our present policy is exactly as was stated in paragraph 2 of that brief, when the United Kingdom Deputy was authorised to support the recommendation provided he made Her Majesty's Government's position clear. The brief also made it clear that in view of the United Kingdom's financial position we could not accept any commitment to make contributions to the proposed Special Fund.

3. Support for the Netherlands draft resolution would involve us in a financial obligation of some £750,000 (made up of a contribution of $920,000 to United Nations Refugee Emergency Fund on the basis of our budget assessment in the Council of Europe and a contribution of $1,176,000 to the 12 million dollar fund on the basis of our budget assessment in the United Nations). Apart from the important question of principle involved in the 12 million dollar fund, it would be quite impossible for us in present circumstances to get the Treasury to agree to commitment of this nature. Another point on which we differ from the Dutch is over this proposal for percentage contributions. In the case of all voluntary contributions to international organisations we have resisted all attempts to tie such contributions to a fixed percentage scale of assessment.

/Acceptance

P.W. Scarlett, Esq., C.M.G.,
Permanent United Kingdom Representative
to the Council of Europe,
Strasbourg.

Acceptance of a percentage principle would inevitably result in the replacement of the "voluntary" Funds by permanent Funds with compulsory assessment.

4. At present government departments are being asked to exercise rigid economy and every attempt is being made to cut down governmental expenditure. In the circumstances it would be quite useless to approach the Chancellor of the Exchequer, even if we were convinced of the merits of the $12 million Scheme which we are not. For your own confidential information, the Chancellor of the Exchequer recently turned down a request by the Secretary of State for a contribution of £50,000 to the Special Fund set up by the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration for the movement of refugees of European origin resident in China, despite personal discussion of the problem with him by the Minister of State and the Colonial Secretary. We still think that something effective could be done through I.C.E.M., whereas "economic" integration with the help of small dollops from the High Commissioner's proposed Fund would seem to have no prospect of success whatever in Countries like Greece and Italy. Our impression is that this is an emotional venture in which long-standing jealousy of I.C.E.M. plays no small part, and that its practical possibilities have not been worked out on the ground. The Ford Foundation Fund experience, much quoted in support, turns out in fact to be primarily relevant to refugees in Germany outside the High Commissioner's Mandate, and not to apply at all in Italy and Greece, and only to a modest extent in Austria.

5. So far as UNREF is concerned we can only point to the fact that our contribution was until recently the largest and that so far only 17 governments have contributed to the Fund. We cannot give any firm promise that we shall make a further contribution to UNREF or accept any obligation to make a second contribution. The furthest we can go on the matter is to say that the question of a further contribution will be kept under review in the light of circumstances and of our own general financial position. I agree entirely with your view that acceptance of a firm commitment to contribute to the $5 million Fund which would then scale down the amount due by the value of the assistance already rendered to international refugees, would be entirely disreputable.

6. We have recently sent you under separate cover copies of the brief provided for the discussion of the United Nations High Commissioner's Report in the Economic and Social Council (IOC(54)106) together with copies of an exchange of telegrams between the Foreign Office and the United Kingdom Delegation at Geneva reporting the results of the Council's deliberations. The principal topic under discussion was the High Commissioner's proposal for a 12 million dollar Fund, and as you will see from the reporting telegrams, Sir Alec Randall made the United Kingdom position quite clear and abstained on the resolution which commended the proposal to the attention of the General Assembly. I cannot hold out any hope of a change in our attitude to this proposal and must therefore ask you to continue to oppose the relevant sections of the Netherlands resolution on the lines set out in C.E. Briefs 56, 62 and 70 (54) and in 13-14

/of

of IOC (54)106.

7. As regards Pontius Pilate (paragraph 8 of your letter 39/46/54 of July 7), we cannot accept the analogy! If you will refer to Annex B of IOC (54)106 you will see that we have poured out large sums on refugee welfare since the closing years of the Second World War, in addition to admitting over 250,000 refugees to this country (including some 114,000 Poles who have been integrated into the economy through the machinery of the Polish Resettlement Act). Our record in international assistance to refugees is second only to that of the United States both in the provision of cash and of resettlement opportunities. What is now left is a residue of some 350,000 within the High Commissioner's Mandate, mostly Volksdeutsche in Austria.

8. A copy of this letter has gone to Wardrop at Geneva.

Yours ever,

E.R. Warner

(E.R. Warner)

Office of the

39/54/54

39/54/54.

August 25, 1954.

Sir,

I should be grateful if you would forward to the Special Representative for National Refugees and Overpopulation the enclosed reply to his letter to Mr. Eden of the 28th June (transmitted under cover of your letter D.8110 of the 5th July).

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

(C.J. Audland)

Copy sent to M.A.D. under cover of rep. 2/8

The Secretary-General,
Council of Europe,
Strasbourg.

39/53/54

No. 29 (M 581/26) UNCLASSIFIED.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to Her Majesty's Representative at

Strasbourg

and transmits herewith copy of the under-mentioned paper.

Foreign Office,
August 17, , 1954

REFERENCE TO PREVIOUS CORRESPONDENCE:

DESCRIPTION OF ENCLOSURE

Name and Date	Subject
Copy of a letter dated August 17, 1954 from the Minister of State to M. P. Schneiter, Special Representative of the Council of Europe for National Refugees and Over-population, and original for transmission to M. Schneiter.	Problems of National Refugees and Over-population in Europe.

Pass to Lee on return

CAT 25/8

A similar despatch has been addressed to Her Majesty's Representative / Consular Officer at

44490—7

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

No. M 581/26. August 17, 1954.

Sir,

My colleagues and I have given careful consideration to your letter of the 28th of June about the problem of National Refugees and Overpopulation in Europe.

2. Her Majesty's Government view with sympathy any constructive approach to the problems to which you have drawn attention in your letter. As was, however, made clear at the time of the discussion in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe of the proposal to create the appointment which you now hold, Her Majesty's Government consider that these problems are primarily the concern of the countries affected.

3. The United Kingdom has long been a country of emigration, and the post war years have shown it to be still one of the largest countries of emigration in Europe, most of the emigrants making their way with or without Government assistance to the self-governing countries of the Commonwealth. With a population exceeding 50 million and still expanding, the United Kingdom is now one of the most densely populated countries in the world and supports a population greatly in excess of the food producing capacity of the land. With its industries and agriculture already highly developed and little scope for further large-scale internal expansion, the United Kingdom has little room for the absorption of workers from other countries.

4. Moreover, at the end of the war as a special contribution to the relief of distress abroad and the resettlement of refugees

/uprooted

Monsieur Pierre Schneiter,
Special Representative for National Refugees and Overpopulation,
Council of Europe,
Strasbourg.

uprooted by the war, the United Kingdom Government admitted or allowed to remain in the country some 225,000 foreigners, including members of the Polish Forces serving under British Command and their dependants, and nearly 80,000 Displaced Persons recruited under official schemes for work in the under-manned industries. This had the effect of nearly doubling the size of the resident foreign population. Any further large scale immigration not related to immediate economic needs would bring about difficult problems of absorption now that the acute overall labour shortage of the post-war reconstruction period has passed and the admission of workers from abroad has to be carried out on a more selective basis.

5. In these circumstances, the general aim of the immigration policy of Her Majesty's Government is to facilitate the entry of foreign workers where this can bring useful additions to the labour force, subject to the fundamental principles that permits are not granted to enable foreigners to enter the country to take up employment where this would result in displacing or excluding British labour, and that there should be no exploitation of foreign workpeople by the undercutting of British wage standards or working conditions. Under this policy, which is flexible in application and subject to no numerical limitation or quota, an average of some 35,000 new permits have been issued for the services of individual foreign workers each year since 1947. In addition, during the past three years more than 8,000 workers have been recruited from other European countries under organised schemes for employment in essential British industries.

6. This policy, which is based on the principle of established need for a foreign worker's services in essential employment, fulfils what Her Majesty's Government regard as the first requirement of successful migration in present day conditions, namely,

/the

the assurance of steady employment for the migrant under good conditions and in a job where he is readily acceptable to his fellow workers. A number of the foreign workers entering the country for employment do so for a temporary period; but where the employment continues to be available and provided his work and general conduct are good, the way is open to satisfactory assimilation and settlement for the migrant and his wife and dependent children in the relatively short period of four years. Her Majesty's Government are firmly of the opinion that this could not be achieved in any conditions which disregarded either the views of organised labour or the requirement of a useful and positive contribution to the national economy.

7. In these circumstances, Her Majesty's Government would not feel able to fix a maximum or minimum figure for immigrants on the lines suggested in your letter. You will, however, be aware that the United Kingdom has subscribed to the Code governing the Employment of Nationals of Member Countries which was adopted by the Council of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation in October 1953 after an exhaustive study in that Organisation of the problems of labour mobility in Europe.

8. You also raised in your letter the question of the financing of measures for the integration of National Refugees and Surplus Population. Her Majesty's Government are already bearing very heavy financial burdens, both on the balance of payments and on the Budget, in the fulfilment of their international obligations and world-wide responsibilities. Not only do they feel themselves unable to accept any increase in the present level of Government expenditure, but indeed they are making every effort to find some way in which Government expenditure, particularly that which involves the use of foreign currency, can be reduced. It is in these circumstances that they have, for example, felt unable to accept membership of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (I.C.E.M.). I must therefore inform you that Her Majesty's Government would

/not

not feel able to subscribe to the funds mentioned in your letter.

9. I have endeavoured to set out Her Majesty's Government's position as fully as possible so that, in the light of it, you can decide whether you think that a visit to London for discussion of this question would serve any useful purpose. No doubt you will let me know your views on this in due course.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(For Sir Winston Churchill)

Problem of national refugees and over population in Europe. 1954. MS Refugee Records from the Foreign Office, 1947-1970 FO 750/14. The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom). Refugees, Relief, and Resettlement, link.gale.com/apps/doc/IJRPMR801571397/RRRW?u=omni&sid=bookmark-RRRW&pg=1. Accessed 7 Jan. 2025.